

could not refuse—a return to her roots in television.

This week, Brandis began her new job as a special projects producer for WJLA-TV, ABC-7 right here in the metro DC area. There, she is responsible for developing and assisting in special reports on a variety of topics.

We wish Brandis all the best in this new and exciting venture. And we thank her for her dedicated service to our Committee.

NATIONWIDE GUN BUYBACK ACT

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 4, 2007

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I was first encouraged to introduce the Nationwide Gun Buyback Act, NGBA, in 2003 after actions taken by the District of Columbia residents on Father's Day. On that day, citizens who had lost relatives and representatives of 20 advocacy and victim-support groups gathering at Freedom Plaza, a stone's throw from the White House, to declare a moratorium on murder for the Father's Day weekend. Not only did their moratorium have important symbolic value; in fact there was only one murder that weekend. Of primary importance was the fact that the moratorium was entirely citizen initiated. Residents themselves, around the country, must take responsibility for crime and not regard criminal activity as a matter for the police alone. In 2006 we had the fewest murders on record for the District of Columbia in 20 years, however, 2007 is on pace for an increase in the murder rate for the first time in 5 years, a trend reflected in many metropolitan cities, and nearly all of these killings were committed by handguns.

This bill would provide Federal funds to local jurisdictions to engage in gun buyback programs like the successful programs that have been conducted by the District of Columbia. Under the bill, funds would be distributed through the Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD. After evaluation of proposals, added weight would be given to jurisdictions with the greatest incidence of gun violence. The NGBA would require that a jurisdiction certify that it is capable of destroying the guns within 30 days, that it can conduct the program safely, and that an amnesty appropriate for the jurisdiction will be offered. Not only individuals, but groups such as gangs and crews could take advantage of the buyback provisions to encourage them to disarm themselves.

This bill is necessary because, despite the extraordinary demonstrated success of the gun buyback program in the District, local jurisdictions have no readily available funds for similar programs. The District was forced to find money on an ad hoc basis and ran out of funds despite many residents who still desired to turn in guns. Initially, the District conducted a pilot program using funds from HUD. Confronted with long lines of residents, the Police Department then took the program citywide, using drug asset forfeiture funds. Even so, after using \$290,000, the city ran out of funds, but not out of guns that could have been collected. The guns were a "good buy," but hard-pressed jurisdictions, especially big cities, should not have to rob Peter to pay Paul when

it comes to public safety. The federal government can play a unique and non-controversial role in reducing gun violence by providing the small amount authorized by my bill, \$50 million, to encourage buybacks efforts where a local jurisdiction believes they can be helpful.

This bill is also a timely reminder as the District's handgun ban goes before the Supreme Court of the United States, the first time since 1939 that a Second Amendment case has been brought before the Supreme Court. Handguns and their impact on inner cities are indisputable. This legislation offers a common sense attempt to help local jurisdictions reduce killings. All jurisdictions, regardless of local views or laws, want to eliminate the special menace of illegal guns.

Importantly, the bill does not conflict with most stances on the controversial issue of gun control. The bill would simply allow people who desire to remove guns from their homes to do so without incurring criminal penalties for possession. Families, and especially mothers, have feared guns in their homes, but often do not know how to get rid of them. In most jurisdictions, a grandmother, petrified that there is a gun in the house for example, or her grandson, who may possess the illegal weapon, cannot turn it in without subjecting themselves to prosecution. This is reason enough for gun buyback efforts.

Like tax amnesty, gun amnesty, puts a premium on the ultimate goal. When the goal is taxes, the government puts a premium on getting payment for the amount owed. When the goal is guns, the premium is on getting deadly weapons off the streets and out of peoples' homes. This bill is entirely voluntary and does not compel anyone to give up her handgun, even one that is illegally held, it simply offers those who do not want guns in their homes an opportunity to safely dispose of them.

I encourage colleagues to support this very important legislation.

HONORING THE LOUISIANA HONORAIR VETERANS

HON. CHARLES W. BOUSTANY, JR.

OF LOUISIANA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 4, 2007

Mr. BOUSTANY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor a very special group from south Louisiana.

On October 6, 2007, a group of 96 veterans and their guardians will fly to Washington with a very special program. Louisiana HonorAir is providing the opportunity for these veterans from my home State of Louisiana to visit Washington, DC, on a chartered flight free of charge. During their visit, they will visit Arlington National Cemetery and the World War II Memorial. For many, this will be their first and only opportunity to see these sights dedicated to the great service they have provided for our Nation.

Today I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring these great Americans and thanking them for their unselfish service.

URGING SAMHSA TO QUICKLY MOVE FORWARD WITH REVI- SIONS TO THE FEDERAL DRUG- TESTING GUIDELINES

HON. CHARLES W. DENT

OF PENNSYLVANIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 4, 2007

Mr. DENT. Madam Speaker, I am fortunate to have located within my District a company by the name of OraSure Technologies. OraSure, of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, has been at the forefront in the development of diagnostic testing technologies. Specifically, it is the leader in the development of a protocol for the utilization of oral fluid samples in diagnostic testing.

Conducting drug testing on oral fluid samples, as opposed to blood, urine or hair submissions, represents a huge advancement in drug-testing technology. Drawing blood or collecting urine from a subject is invasive and time-consuming, as compared to utilizing an oral fluid sample, which can be obtained from a simple swab of the cheek. Moreover, oral fluid testing is both cost-effective and accurate. For these reasons, the use of this technology has increased. Nearly seven million oral fluid drug specimens have been successfully processed in the non-federally regulated workplace since the technology was first approved by the FDA in 2000.

Technological advancements in the testing of oral fluids for the presence of drugs have come none too soon. In a July 16, 2007 report released by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, SAMHSA, a tenant agency within the Department of Health and Human Services, SAMHSA indicated that illegal drug use is on the rise in the workplace. The survey found that nearly one in every 12 Americans had used illicit drugs in the 30 days prior to the survey. Overall this survey found that 8.2 percent of Americans are drug users, up from 7.7 percent in 1997. Much of the increase in drug use is occurring in our young people, a very real concern for America. In the 18–25 age group, SAMHSA found 19 percent had used drugs in the last month. Still concerning, the 26–34 age group had used drugs at a rate of 10.3 percent. This trend needs to be reversed. The development and availability of testing methods—such as OraSure's—that are accurate, cost-effective, and non-invasive gives employers a tool to set expectations and promote accountability.

SAMHSA recognizes the gravity of drug use in the workplace. Accordingly, it is now revising federal drug-testing guidelines to ensure that more companies and federal agencies have access to the latest advancements in drug testing technology including oral fluid-based testing. I encourage SAMHSA to move quickly with the revisions. Illegal drug use is not just a criminal justice issue; drug use has a negative effect on productivity in the workplace and drug users who labor in positions vital to the public safety constitute a potential threat to homeland security. I commend SAMHSA for taking steps to decrease drug use in our society and I urge quick adoption of revisions to the outdated federal drug-testing guidelines.